

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0968

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BUCHAREST 5423

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, RO

SUBJECT: CEAUSESCU-FOR-LIFE CAMPAIGN

REF: (A) BUCHAREST 5405; (B) MUNICH 1778

1. MOST CURIOUS ANOMALY IN PRE-CONGRESS BUILDUP HAS BEEN FEEBLENESS SO FAR OF MINI-MOVEMENT TO ELECT CEAUSESCU FOR LIFE TO POST OF PARTY GENERAL SECRETARY (REF A).

2. THEME SO FAR SEEMS ENTIRELY BUCHAREST-BASED; "SPECIAL DECISION" BY BUCHAREST CITY PARTY CONFERENCE NOVEMBER 16 WAS NOT PARALLELED BY ANY OTHER (EMBASSY HAS NOW RECEIVED PROVINCIAL PRESS ACCOUNTS OF JUDET PARTY MEETINGS). CZECH EMBOFF, HOWEVER, CLAIMS IDEA WAS BROACHED WITHOUT PUBLICITY AT LEAST IN ARGES, CEAUSESCU'S HOME COUNTY. PROVINCIAL PAPERS NONETHELESS HAVE CARRIED ACCOUNT OF BUCHAREST INITIATIVE. ONLY ONE POEM (UNION OF WRITERS WEEKLY LUCEAFARUL, NOVEMBER 16) HAS APPEARED CALLING NEBULOUSLY FOR LIFE TERM. BUCHAREST CITY DAILY PAPER PRINTED ONE LETTER NOVEMBER 20 AND AGAIN NOVEMBER 21 FROM BUCHAREST DELEGATES TO CONGRESS ASKING CEAUSESCU TO "REMAIN ALWAYS" AT PARTY'S HEAD. BY CONTRAST, AUTHORITATIVE PARTY THEORETICAL JOURNAL ERA SOCIALISTA, FOREIGN AFFAIRS WEEKLY LUMEA, AND PARTY DAILY SCINTEIA (AFTER INITIAL ANNOUNCEMENT), WHILE

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HIGHLIGHTING CEAUSESCU'S RE-ELECTION CAMPAIGN OTHERWISE HAVE ALL

IGNORED "FOR-LIFE" THEME. AS NOTED REFTEL A, PROPOSAL WAS ALSO SURPRISE TO SOME HIGHLY PLACED GOR OFFICIALS IMMEDIATELY AFTER NEWS BROKE. IN FACT NOVEMBER 22 CULTURAL WEEKLY SAPTAMINA CARRIES EDITORIAL URGING REELECTION OF CEAUSESCU IN SENSE OF OVER AND OVER AGAIN (IMPLYING NOT RPT NOT FOR LIFE).

3. THREE EXPLANATIONS (ALL OF WHICH AT THIS STATE STILL SPECULATIVE AND UNCONFIRMED AFTER CANVASSING OF EMB SOURCES) SUGGEST THEMSELVES: (1) BUCHAREST PARTY INITIATIVE WAS UNCLEARED GESTURE BY MAYOR CIOARA OR HIS LIEUTENANTS TO CURRY FAVOR WITH CEAUSESCU ON EVE OF CONGRESS, AND NO FOLLOW-UP CAMPAIGN WAS READY; (2) INITIATIVE WAS SPRUNG BY CEAUSESCU OR SECRETARIAT NATIONWIDE THROUGH LOCAL PARTY ELECTION MEETINGS IN SECRET BUT WAS NOT PUBLICIZE D

IN ORDER TO RESERVE SOME NEWSMAKING EVENT FOR OTHERWISE DULL CONGRESS PROCEEDINGS; MEANWHILE BUCHAREST PAPER ERRED AND LEAKED INITIATIVE PREMATURELY (ONE RUMOR IN FACT HAS IT THAT PAPER'S STAFF WILL BE SHAKEN UP AS RESULT); (3) INITIATIVE WAS CEAUSESCU-BACKED TRIAL BALLOON THAT IS MEETING RESISTANCE IN PARTY LEADERSHIP AND/OR RANK AND FILE, AND DELAY IN LAUNCHING FULL-SCALE CAMPAIGN REFLECTS RESERVATIONS OF RCP SOBERFWDES AS TO WHETHER IDEA IS WISE AND WHO INSIST ON PARTY EXCO APPROVAL. IN THIS CONNECTION, CEAUSESCU WAS PRESENT AT BUCHAREST CITY MEETING BUT, AT LEAST ACCORDING TO PUBLISHED ACCOUNT, NEITHER SCOTCHED NOR BLESSED PROPOSAL. EXCO NOV. 20 " TOOK SEVERAL MEASURES FOR ORGANIZING CONGRESS" BUT DID NOT SPECIFY WHAT, AND ONE SOURCE SAYS ANOTHER EXCO SESSION MAY TAKE PLACE BEFORE CONGRESS STARTS NOVEMBER 25.

4. NO CAUSAL CONNECTION BETWEEN KATUSHEV'S VISIT AND "FOR-LIFE" INITIATIVE HAS SURFACED HERE, AND OUR ASSESSMENT REMAINS THAT IN REF A. BARNES

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